

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-167. Cancelled.

168. (Withdrawn and currently amended) Multiple composite particles ~~as recited in claim 109,~~
comprising:

particles of sodium bentonite clay;
particles of expanded perlite; and
particles of powder activated carbon,

wherein at least about 80% of the particles are retained in a clump upon addition of an aqueous solution.

169. (Withdrawn and currently amended) Multiple composite particles ~~as recited in claim 109,~~
comprising:

particles of sodium bentonite clay;
particles of expanded perlite; and
particles of powder activated carbon,

wherein at least about 90% of the particles are retained in a clump upon addition of an aqueous solution.

170. (Withdrawn and currently amended) Multiple composite particles ~~as recited in claim 109,~~
comprising:

particles of sodium bentonite clay;
particles of expanded perlite; and
particles of powder activated carbon,

wherein at least about 95% of the particles are retained in a clump after 6 hours upon addition of 10 ml of animal urine.

171. (Withdrawn and currently amended) Composite particles recited in claim 170 having improved clumping characteristics, comprising:

~~granules of an absorbent material formed into particles, each particle having~~ areas of more-water-soluble ~~absorbent material~~ sodium bentonite and less-water-soluble ~~absorbent material~~ sodium bentonite relative to each other, the areas of more-water-soluble ~~absorbent material~~ sodium bentonite being capable of dislodging from the associated particle when wetted and becoming entrained between adjacent particles, the entrained ~~absorbent material~~ sodium bentonite forming a bond between the adjacent particles.

172. (Withdrawn and currently amended) Composite particles as recited in claim 171, wherein the ~~absorbent material~~ is sodium bentonite having a mean particle diameter of about 1000 microns or less.

173. (Withdrawn) Composite particles as recited in claim 172, wherein the sodium bentonite has a mean particle diameter in the range of about 25 to about 150 microns.

174. (Withdrawn) Composite particles as recited in claim 171, further comprising a performance-enhancing active, wherein the performance-enhancing active includes at least one of an antimicrobial, an odor reducing material, a binder, a fragrance, a health indicating material, a color altering agent, a dust reducing agent, a nonstick release agent, a superabsorbent material, cyclodextrin, zeolite, activated carbon, a pH altering agent, a salt forming material, a ricinoleate and mixtures thereof.

175. (Withdrawn) Composite particles as recited in claim 171, wherein a performance-

enhancing additive is sprayed onto the particles.

176. (Withdrawn) Composite particles as recited in claim 171, wherein granules of a performance-enhancing additive is dry-blended with the particles, with or without addition of a binder.

177-185. (Cancel)

186. (Currently Amended) A plurality of porous composite particles comprising:

a mixture of sodium bentonite, expanded perlite and activated carbon formed into a plurality of homogeneously agglomerated porous composite particles suitable for use as an animal litter,

wherein substantially each homogeneously agglomerated composite particle contains a percentage of sodium bentonite, a percentage of expanded perlite and a percentage of activated carbon, wherein at least a portion of the carbon is encapsulated within the pores of the composite particle,

wherein the clump strength, an indication of the percentage of particles retained in a clump after six hours upon addition of ~~an aqueous solution~~ animal urine, is greater than 90%.

187. (Cancelled)

188. (Cancelled)

189. (Currently Amended) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the activated carbon is powdered activated carbon (PAC).

190. (Currently Amended) The plurality of composite particles as recited in claim 189, wherein the activated carbon is present in about 5 weight percent or less.

191. (Previously Presented) The plurality of composite particles as recited in claim 186, wherein said homogeneously agglomerated composite particles range in size from 100 μm to 10 mm.

192. (Previously Presented) The plurality of composite particles as recited in claim 186, wherein said homogeneously agglomerated composite particles range in size from 400-1650 μm .

193. (Cancelled)

194. (Cancelled)

195. (Currently amended) The plurality of composite particles as recited in claim 186, wherein said homogeneously agglomerated composite particles have a bulk density ~~less than~~ between 0.25 g/cc and 0.5 g/cc.

196. (Cancelled)

197. (Previously presented) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, further comprising at least one of an antimicrobial, an odor control boron-containing material, a binder, a fragrance, a health indicating material, a color altering agent, a dust reducing agent, a nonstick release agent, a superabsorbent material, cyclodextrin, zeolite, a pH altering agent, a salt forming material, a ricinoleate and mixtures thereof.

198. (Previously presented) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the composite particles have a moisture content of less than about 15% by weight based on a weight of the composite particle.

199. (Cancel)

200. (Currently amended) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the plurality of homogeneously agglomerated composite particles have a hydraulic conductivity value of ~~about~~ 0.25 cm/s or less.

201. (Previously presented) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the composite particle is capable of absorbing a weight of water equaling at least about 90 percent of a weight of the composite particle.

202. (Currently amended) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim ~~201~~ 186, wherein the composite particle is capable of absorbing a weight of water equaling at least about 75 percent of a weight of the composite particle

203. (Previously presented) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the composite particles have a dusting attrition value of at most about 15% as measured by ASTM method E- 728 Standard Test Method for Resistance to Attrition of Granular Carriers and Granular Pesticides.

204. (Previously presented) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the composite particles have a malodor rating below about 15 as determined by a Malodor Sensory Method.

205. (Previously presented) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the clump strength is greater than 95%.

206-208. (Cancel)